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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 003594

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SUBJECT: MOD MUKHTAR MEETS GENERAL PETRAEUS

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary. During a November 3 meeting with CENTCOM Commander General Petraeus, Minister of Defense Mukhtar expressed concern about the political difficulties that ongoing U.S. strikes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were creating for the Pakistani government. He requested additional U.S. economic support in the upcoming four to six critical months for the government. Petraeus agreed to consider Pakistani concerns about strikes and urged the GOP to take the lead in preparing the Pakistani public for a much-needed IMF program. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Minister of Defense Chaudry Ahmed Mukhtar met November 3 with Ambassador and CENTCOM Commander General David Petraeus. Also attending were State Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher, Office of Defense Representative Pakistan Rear Admiral LeFever, CENTCOM J-3 MG Jones, CENTCOM POLAD Gfoeller, CENTCOM Colonel Bell, Polcouns (notetaker), and MOD Secretary Rasool.

¶3. (C) Mukhtar expressed appreciation that Petraeus had chosen Pakistan as his first overseas stop after assuming command of CENTCOM. He said that the fight against extremism was clearly Pakistan's own war, not solely America's war. The GOP had improved relations with Afghanistan and believed that stability across the border was critical to stability in Pakistan. Mukhtar observed that more Pakistanis had died in the fight against extremism than coalition servicemembers in Afghanistan. For Pakistan to "do more," the government needed popular support.

¶4. (C) Unfortunately, said Mukhtar, U.S. attacks in the FATA were being played in the media in a way that was making the situation difficult for the government. Pakistan's parliament had met in a joint session and produced a consensus resolution against extremism. This was an important step forward, but the government had to show it could implement the resolution's provisions (Note: which included defending Pakistan's sovereignty). Rasool noted that even the Pashtun-based Awami National Party and the tribal area parliamentarians had supported passage of the resolution. It was important to make U.S. strikes more carefully targeted and timed in order to avoid negative consequences.

¶5. (C) Petraeus said he would keep Pakistani concerns in mind; in the past, the U.S. felt it had to conduct certain operations unilaterally. But we would prefer that Pakistan conduct the entire anti-extremist campaign itself. He had just met with Chief of Army Staff General Kayani (septel) and had been reassured by Kayani's briefing that Pakistan had a

campaign plan for addressing the militants and miscreants in the FATA.

¶6. (C) Mukhtar, who until 3 November 2008 was also Minister of Commerce, asked for U.S. economic support over what he described as the next four to six crucial months. The GOP had cut subsidies and done 90% of what the IMF wanted Pakistan to do, but an IMF package would be difficult for the population to swallow. He appreciated U.S. support in establishing a Friends of Pakistan group, but urged additional U.S. support.

¶7. (C) Petraeus suggested that the GOP needed to "lead the way" rhetorically in convincing its own public to support an IMF package. This would make it easier to create popular acceptance of the difficult decisions ahead. As it was being played by the GOP now, it made it look like the GOP was only capitulating to IMF intervention at the eleventh hour; this in turn had the downside of also discouraging additional bilateral support from potential International donors. Rasool observed that 25% of the poorest Pakistanis who live without any safety net would suffer from an IMF package. Mukhtar said that Pakistan needs only short-term help to avoid consequences of inflation, including possible food riots. A/S Boucher noted that the U.S. was providing support through traditional USAID programs and we looked forward to building support structures for additional assistance through the Friends group. Mukhtar responded that creating jobs was critical; legislation to establish Reconstruction Opportunity Zones was stuck in the U.S. Congress. Boucher said we hoped that the legislation would

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pass during an upcoming lame duck session.

¶8. (C) Rasool also raised the need for night vision equipment and attack helicopters to enhance the COIN capabilities of Pakistan's security forces. Petraeus noted that night vision goggles could enhance performance but their reliance on batteries represented an expensive logistical burden, and they were not a panacea. Rasool and Mukhtar also urged that the U.S. provide assistance to persons displaced by the current fighting in Bajaur.
PATTERSON